

FROM UP ON POPPY HILL

By Lorraine Viade, Psy.D.



From Up on Poppy Hill is the latest hypnotic anime from studio Ghibli. If you have seen *Ponyo*, you know how wonderful these imported Japanese stories are. The art is so detailed in places that you forget that it isn't real. The stories are simple and deal with real emotions in a sensitive manner. This time, we meet a high school couple who meet and fall in love in the 1960s. Pretty simple, right? Not so fast. This is, after all, from the nation that gave us *Rashomon* and *The Seven Samurai*. Nothing is simple or easy, but the process of meeting, choosing and loving is timeless. And despite a few bumps along a damp, cobblestone road, a happy ending prevails.

I enjoy the mature, yet innocent, spirit of these films. They deal with loss and death, honor and friendship in simple direct language – and without the disrespect that seems to dominate so much of western teen portraits in the cinema. What a delight it is to watch a film that is not violent or filled with expletives and bathroom humor. There is a place for those movies; I am just happy these exist as well.

The adults are caring, supportive and present. Yet, like many homes today, they are separated by necessity, tragedy or by circumstance. How lives are intertwined, and held by an interlocking hand of fate, is so charming and, at the same time, so moving. I love these films because they allow the child in me to be both child and adult at the same time. With the way of the world looming large in our lives, our kids being more mature and having life-altering experiences earlier in life, these stories are a blessing because everyone can relate to them. I knew only of Disney and the usual American-made child-fare which had its own moments of tragedy and danger, but these have a totally different flavor to them. The themes, however, are universal and translate well. Many stars who call Hollywood home lend their voices to these films and,

when dubbed, they are quite delightful and made more familiar somehow by the voices of actors we know and love.

So, take your kids, yourself and, if your parents are around, take them, too. Take your favorite aunt and uncle, your nieces and nephews. And if you don't have any of those, then just go with your inner child in tow and be mesmerized by the genius that is well made anime. The talents of Hayao and Goro Miyazaki are at your disposal. Nobody does it better. Enter into another world for a few hours and forget the troubles of the week. You deserve it.

Now playing at the Pasadena Playhouse 7 Laemmle Theater, I give *From Up on Poppy Hill* four poppies.

